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 Date 2-14-16

HA POSITION

Our human rights policy is being fundamentally tested in the case of Argentina. In bilateral relations with the U.S. and other democratic governments, Argentina's well documented human rights violations have been the subject of intensive concern. The Argentine Government is sensitive to its poor international image, and international pressure has been a major factor in those improvements which have occurred in the past year. Even the anticipation of a critical report by the Inter-American Human Rights Commission had a positive effect on the human rights conduct of the GOA.

To adopt Option B would give a signal not only to Argentina but to the rest of the world that our human rights policy is indeed inconsistent. In particular, it would set back the significant progress made in the recent UN Human Rights Commission where we worked to help establish a mechanism to deal with disappearances. The situation of disappeareds in Argentina provided a major impetus for UNHRC action.

It can be argued that several of the GOA's steps, which are attributed to recent U.S. initiatives, were the result of a standard of conduct we should expect from that Government regardless of whether we adopted option A or B. The GOA has been playing the Soviet card: at

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the UNHRC meeting in Geneva, in its grain sales policy, and last week at the San Jose meeting on the Cuban refugee situation. Whether the Argentine Government seeks closer political ties with the Soviet Union will depend more on domestic political considerations than on outside human rights pressure. The attached annex paper on the evolution of Argentine-Soviet relations tends to support the argument that the GOA will not rush into a closer relationship with the Soviet Union, rather than the contrary position taken by ARA.

The Argentine Government has supported Soviet and Cuban positions as a naked expedient in seeking allies to deflect human rights condemnation in the international fora. The USG should not fall into the trap of making decisions on the premise that our human rights policy is driving Argentina into the Soviet orbit. This premise implies that a policy of concern for human rights weakens democratic institutions--a logic that does not withstand scrutiny. Option A has produced improvements in Argentina. To move away from this policy, when significant human rights deprivations continue and when thousands of disappeareds remain unaccounted for, would strengthen the GOA's belief that the Soviet card tactics are indeed powerful.

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